Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.
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EDITORIAL

It has been a source of amazement and pleasure to have kept the subscription to your Newsletter unchanged for the last ten years. Unfortunately we have now reached the point where our outgoings exceed our income, and the decision has been made to forgo the subsidy we enjoy from the Spanish Main, and become totally self financing. Accordingly we must increase our subscription to £5 (Europe) or US$12 (Elsewhere). Overdue subscriptions (1990) are now payable at the new rate!

The proportionally larger increase for our UK members reflects the need to pay room rent for our Central American meetings and our share of provincial meetings. Please ensure you get value for money by attending whenever possible!

Four of our members exhibited at New Zealand, and we would like to extend our Congratulations to Finn Stjernholck (Vermeil), Clyde Maxwell (Large Silver) and Ted Bahry (Silver). I note that the 'medal' is a replica of the Perkins Bacon obliterator used in New Zealand, which will make it difficult to display.

Congratulations also to Jorg Maier upon winning the Spanish Main Cup this year. I am informed that there were some particularly outstanding entries this year.

Finally I would add that since we are now financially independent we shall be publishing accounts in future, which will be included with the April issue.

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GUATEMALA: THE SMALL NUMERAL CANCELS by CECILE GRUSON

These cancellations, listed in "Guatemala 1" Handbook as "CNS" are found mainly on the issues of 1889 to 1895, and to a lesser extent up to the issue of 1907. They are not common. Numbers as high as 153 have been reported and so far c.21 remain unaccounted for. No official documentation on them has been found as, if ever available, it was probably destroyed during the 1917-18 earthquakes. So the story must be pieced together painstakingly from the scant material available.

Thirty-five numbers have been identified to date, the majority documented by only one cover. As these cancellers, made from soft rubber by R Arachea of Guatemala evidently wore out quickly, identification of some of the numbers is liable to be subjective to some extent.

Many collectors have wondered what criteria were used for the distribution of the numbers. Whilst an alphabetical sequence looks plausible from Costa de Cucho (CNS 74) to Xolhuitz (CNS 148), the lower numbers were certainly not assigned in that order, eg Quezaltenango is CNS 2. On the other hand, apart from La Reforma (CNS 14), the identified lower numbers are all department capitals. Distribution by volume of mail, a plausible theory for the lower numbers, did not get me very far: Ocos (CNS 28) handled a third of the volume of mail handled by Xolhuitz (CNS 148) in 1888!

I tried to combine both approaches, taking into account that:-

- there were three classes of post offices listed in the Souvenir Album of 1897, and
- the 1888 postal statistics (reproduced in El Quetzal, October 1977) list 148 post offices.

After laying out the one hundred and fifty three numbers and placing the identified post offices correctly, I copied the 1888 list in the intervals, starting at the top with the first class post offices listed in 1897 and worked the 1888 data backwards. The result was startlingly convincing, as appears from the somewhat refined Projection at the end of the article. Unless the archives in Guatemala yield more information, it will probably never be possible to assign small numerals to all the individual post offices because:-

a) the statistic used to determine the volume of mail is not that of 1888 or 1887, as far as can be ascertained;

b) the alphabetical sequence used in postal publications in C19th Guatemala was only approximate. This is the case in particular for saints' names which, in the 1887/88 statistics, appear to be listed in the chronological order in which they were opened, although I lack conclusive proof of this;

c) the 1887 or 1888 lists of post offices by class are not available.

Even taking these uncertainties into account, my Projection should - and has - proved useful when new covers with blurred numerals are discovered, making identification somewhat more reliable and certainly easier. This is the only ambition of this article.

The identified numbers pretty well confirm the inference that assignment was made according to the following criteria:-

CNS 1to 29: first class post offices, in order of decreasing volume of mail (on the basis of an estimation of mail volume at mid-1888?) in the following order: the national capital, departmental capitals, others.

CNS 30 to 37: second class post offices, approximately in alphabetical order.

CNS 38 to 148: third class post offices, roughly in alphabetical order.

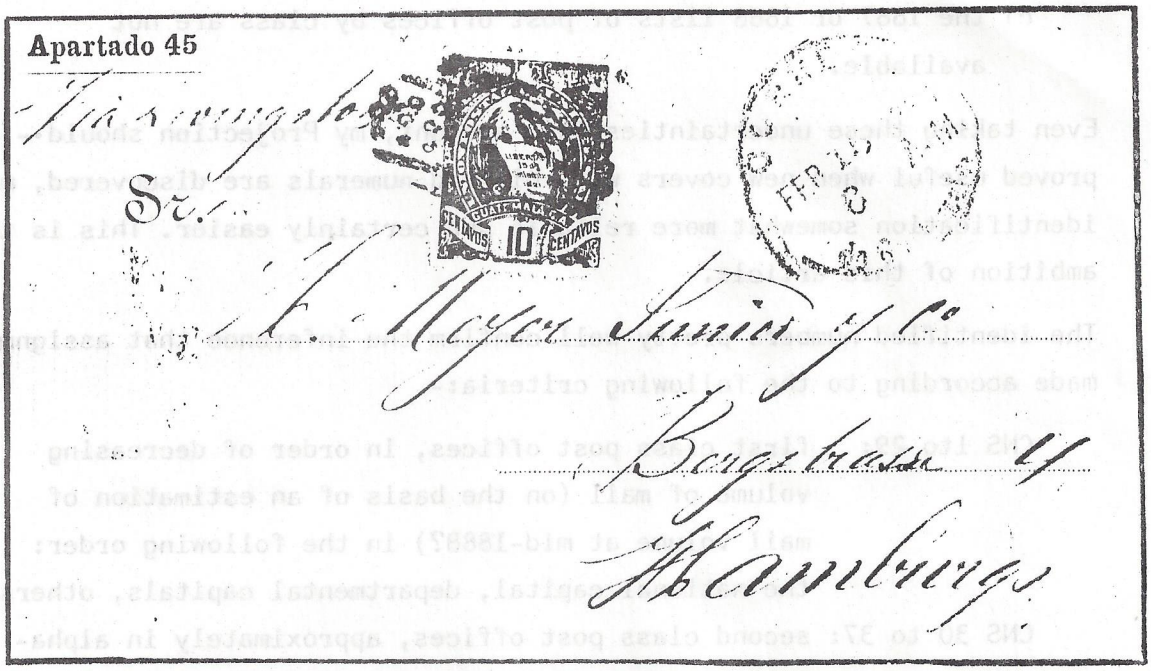
CNS 149 to 153: post offices opened after January 1, 1889.

The 1888 statistics also permit a more precise dating of their distribution:

1. Rabinal (CNS 96) and San Pedro Carcha (CNS 122), which were opened in November 1887, according to Diccionario Geografico, are in alphabetical sequence, which excludes distribution before late 1887. This conclusively proves that these cancels cannot be legitimate if found on the 1881 issue and the 1886 provisionals.
2. Chicacao and San Miguel Purulha, which were opened in June 1888 and later in the year, respectively, are also in the 1888 statistics; the small numeral cancels, therefore, must have been distributed late in 1888.

So far, all known covers are dated 1889 or later, which confirms this reasoning. We can be reasonably sure that they were distributed some time in the second half of 1888, in as much as:

- the volume of mail sequence for department capitals is not quite that of the 1888 statistics. I have indicated in brackets, after each first class post office, the numeral which would have been assigned on the basis of the 1888 statistics;
- I have CNS 1 on cover dated February 15, 1889 (see illustration): the cancel is already pretty worn which points to at least a couple of months use.



CNS 1 on cover dated February 15, 1889

Logically, numerals 149 to 153 were distributed in 1889 to newly-opened post offices, although we have no list because of the absence of later statistics. Distribution was probably discontinued soon after, when it became evident that these cancellers wore out too fast to be of any long-term use. Rapid wear also explains why no numerals have yet been identified for such larger towns as Retalhuleu, Antigua or Escuintla. In many places, they were probably not used longer than about a couple of years.

Only two identified numerals do not fit the above sequence: it seems they were given incorrect identifications.

LA REFORMA CNS 14: Although I have not been able to find confirmation of it in Diccionario Geografico, La Reforma may be the same place as Costa de Cucho. Walter Lind, in a Collectors Club Philatelist article of January 1932 reported that they were the same place. At first I did not agree with this as the 1893 and 1897 postal publications listed them as being separate places. La Reforma was created as a "municipio" late in 1888, but is not mentioned as such in the 1888 statistics.

If this post office had been opened only in 1889, then its numeral should be higher than 148. On the other hand, according to my Projection, Costa de Cucho should have a CNS in the 40's, whereas La Reforma is in the correct alphabetical sequence as CNS 74, which reinforces the theory of a change of name. I have received confirmation from Guatemalan sources that Cost de Cucho's name was indeed changed to honour the memory of Justo Rufino Barrios, the President

known as "El Reformador", who had been killed in battle in 1885. Without knowledge of this change of name, the confusion between CNS 14 and 74 was very understandable. With the chronic lack of money to order cancelling devices, it is also possible that La Reforma's post office continued to use the Costa de Cucho date-stamp, perhaps until the uniform Waterlow octagons were distributed in 1894. A cover addressed to "Reforma, Costa de Cucho " confirms this reasoning.

Jocotan CNS 79: is the second problem child and clearly an example of the difficulty of identifying worn cancellers. The cover's owner wrote to me saying he thought the numeral was 79 but could not be sure. I am inclined to think it should be 70, the difference between a broken "0" and "9" being very small.

Among the identified numbers, CNS 143 is indicated as being "somewhere in Alta Verapaz". If my sequence is correct, then this number should be assigned to Tactic.

Finally, two new identifications are announced herewith:

Livingston is CNS 10: The item, dated 1901, has a rather weak and blurred CNS, which could be either a 10 or a 16. The latter numeral is unlikely, as the 1888 statistics give Livingston as the 10th post office by volume of mail.

Gualan is CNS 63: Without my Projection, chances are that its owner would have identified the over-inked numeral as 68!

If further postal statistics and postmasters' annual reports could be found, some of the questions remaining might be answered. Any correction or additional information will be gratefully received via the Editor.

A similar article appeared in "El Quetzal" No.262 for January 1990.

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THE NICARAGUA STUDY GROUP

On June 1, 1990, the Nicaragua Study Group was formed for the purpose of studying and promoting the collection of stamps of Nicaragua. A quarterly publication, "NICARAO" has now been published and the first issue is available upon request in return for a stamped addressed envelope (No.10, 45c/A5 40g).

Group subscription is $15 (US), $20 (Overseas). Applications for membership, further enquiries, and the sample copy are all available from:-

Clyde R Maxwell, Nicaragua Study Group, 2041 Business Center Drive, Suite 101, Irvine, CA 92715. U.S.A.

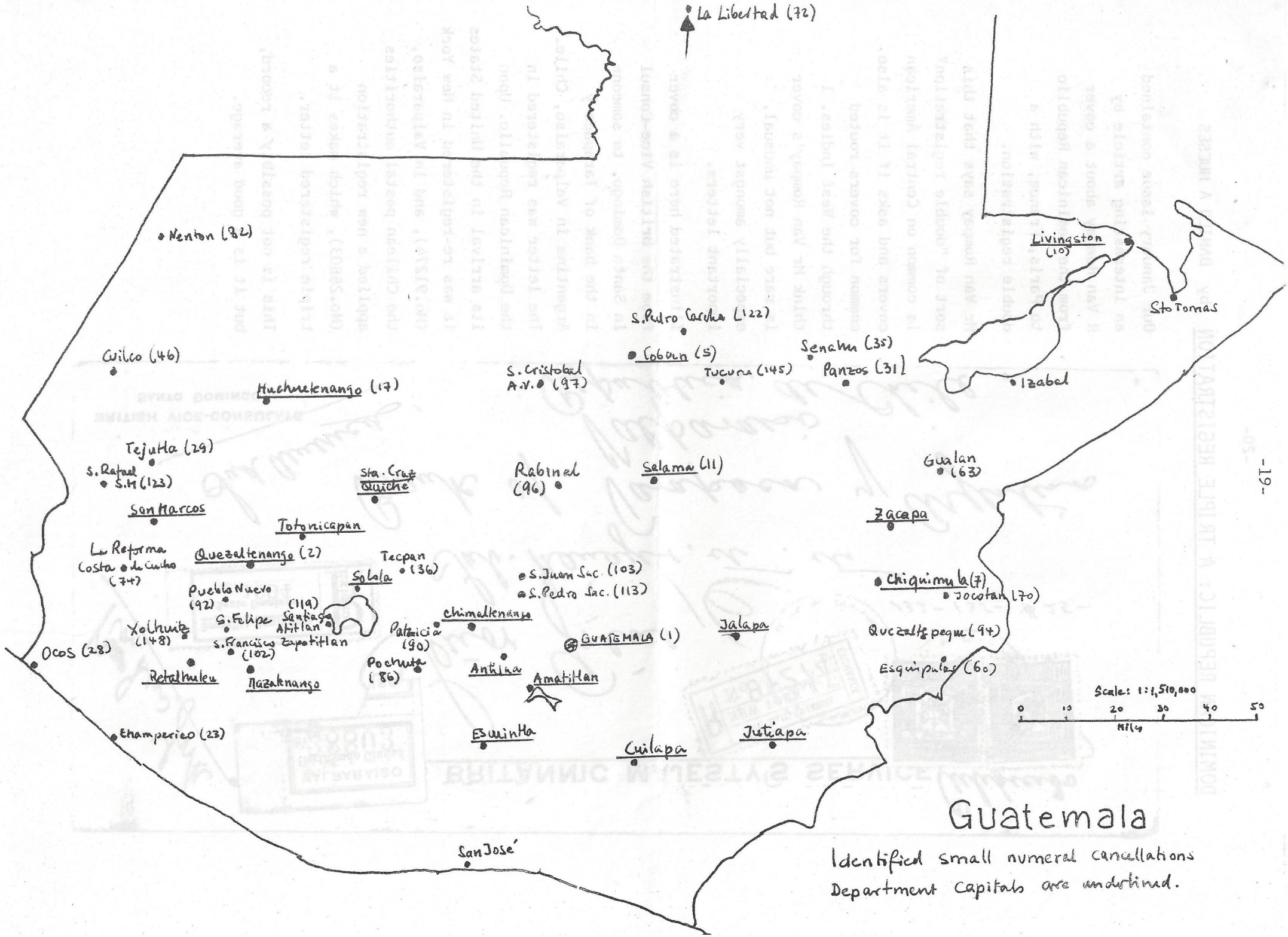
GUATEMALA: Projection of assignment of SMALL NUMERAL CANCELLATIONS

1 Guatemala D.G.
2 Quezaltenango
3 Antigua
4 Retalhuleu
5 Coban (6)
6 Zacapa (5)
7 Chiquimula
8 San Marcos
9 Escuintla (7)
10 Livingston
11 Salama
12 Mazatenango
13 Solola
14 Chimaltenango
15 Jutiapa
16 Quiché
17 Huehuetenango (21)
§ 18 Jalapa
§ 19 Totonicapan
20 Cuilapa
21 Amatitlan (17)
22 Flores
23 Champerico
§ 24 Izabal
25 Las Marias
26 Pto. San José
27 Sta. Lucia Cotz.
28 Ocos
29 Tejutla
30 Cuyotenango
31 Panzos
32 Patzun
33 Rodeo
34 San Felipe
35 Senahu
36 Tecpan
37 S.Agustin (Solola)
38 Acatenango
39 Asuncion Mita
40 Ayutla
41 Bobos
42 Caballo Blanco
43 Cerro Redondo
44 Ciudad Vieja
45 Coatepeque
46 Cuilco
47 Comalapa
§ 48 Cubulco
49 Chiantla
50 Chinautla
51 Chichicastenango
52 Chingo
§ 53 Chiquimulilla
54 Chimaltenango (Hue)
55 Chisec
§ 56 Chimalapa
57 Chicacao
58 Don Garcia
59 El Porvenir
60 Esquipulas
61 Guastatoya
§ 62 Guarda Viejo
63 Gualan
§ 64 Ipala
§ 65 Ixtahuacan
§ 66 Jacaltenango
67 Jalpatagua
68 Jilotepeque
69 Joyabaj
70 Jocotan
71 La Concepcion
72 La Libertad
73 La Violeta
74 La Reforma (Costa de Cucho)
75 Los Encuentros
76 Malacatan
77 Mataquesquintla
78 Mixco
79 Momostenango
80 Morazan
§ 81 Naranjo
82 Nenton
83 Olintepeque
84 Ostuncalco
85 Palin
86 Pochuta
87 Palencia
88 Panajachel
89 Patulul
90 Patzicia
91 Palmar
92 Pueblo Nuevo
93 Pueblo Viejo
94 Quezaltepeque
95 Quirigua
96 Rabinal
97 San Crisobal A.V.
98 San Lucas Toliman
99 San Andres Osuna
§ 100 San Pablo
101 S.Pedro Pinula
102 S.Francisco Zapotitlan
103 S.Juan Sacatapaquez
104 S. Martin C.
§ 105 S. Mateo
106 S. Juan Ixcoy
107 S. Pedro Necta
108 S. Juan Atitan
§ 109 S. Sebastian
110 S. Martin (Reu)
111 S. Andres Iztapa
112 S. Andres Semetabaj
113 S. Pedro Sacatepequez
§ 114 S. Cristobal Tot.
115 S. Antonio Sac.
116 S. Mateo (Que)
117 S. Agustin Ac.
118 S. José Barberena
119 Santiago Atitlan
120 S. Cristobal Cucho
121 S. Jeronimo
122 S. Pedro Carcha
123 S. Rafael S.M.
124 S. Antonio Such.
125 S. Miguel Purulha
126 Sto. Tomas (Pto)
127 Sta.Lucia Malacatan
128 Sta.Catarina Mita
§ 129 Sta.Lucia Utatlan
130 Sta. Rosa
131 Sta. Eulalia
132 Sta. Isabel
133 Sta. Barbara
134 Sacapulas
135 Salcaja
136 Sanarate
137 Sija
138 Siquinala
§ 139 Soloma
140 Sumpango
141 Samayac
142 Tacana
143 Tactic A.V.
144 Tumbador
145 S. Miguel Tucuru
146 Villa Nueva
147 Villa de Guadalupe
148 Xolhuitz
149
§ 150
§ 151
§ 152
153

Names underlined _____ are identified
---------- are almost sure

(..) sequence according to 1888 statistics

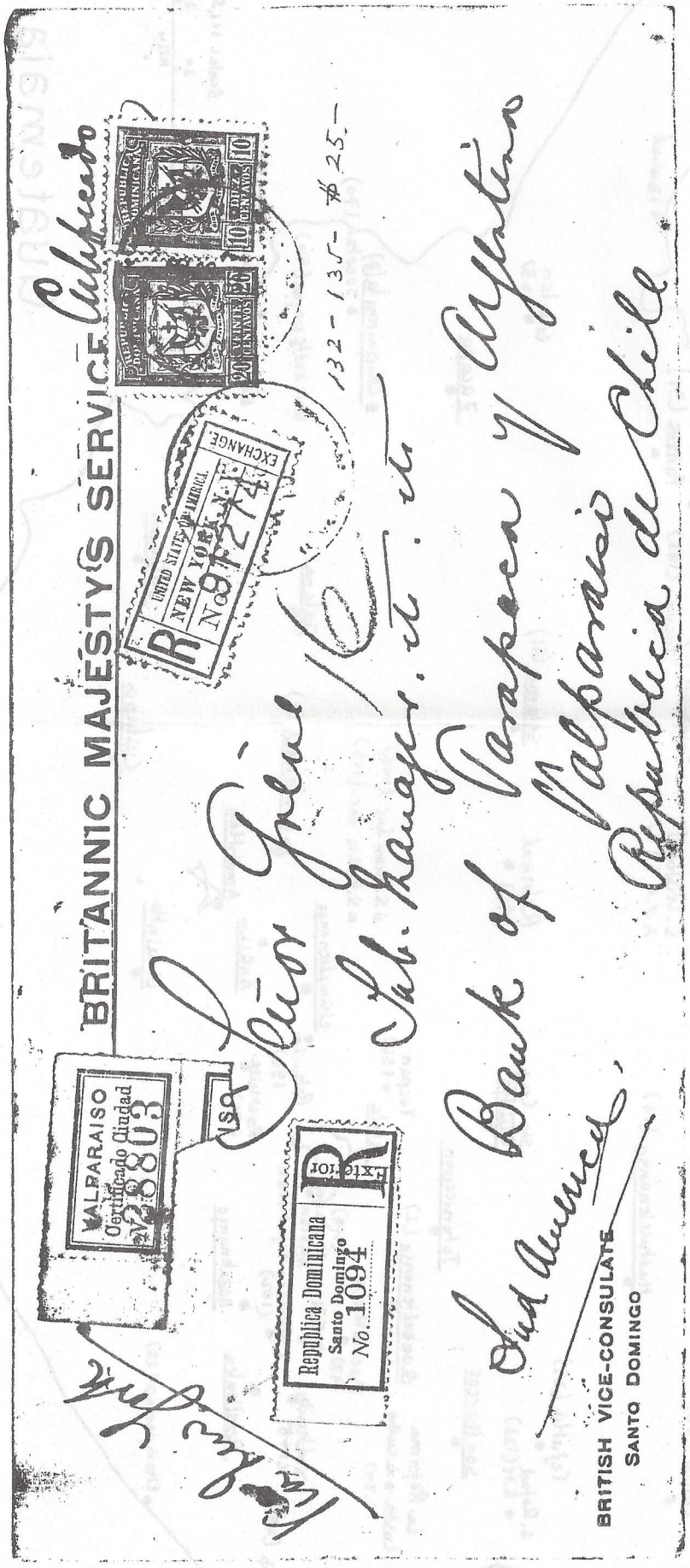
§ numerals sofar unaccounted for



Guatemala

Identified small numeral cancellations
Department capitals are underlined.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: A TRIPLE REGISTRATION by DANILO A MUESES



Our January issue contained an interesting article by R Van Rompay about a cover from the Dominican Republic to Paris, France, with a double registration.

Mr Van Rompay says that this sort of "double registration" is common on Central American covers and asks if it is also common for covers routed through the West Indies. I think Mr Van Rompay's cover is rare but not unusual, especially amongst very important letters.

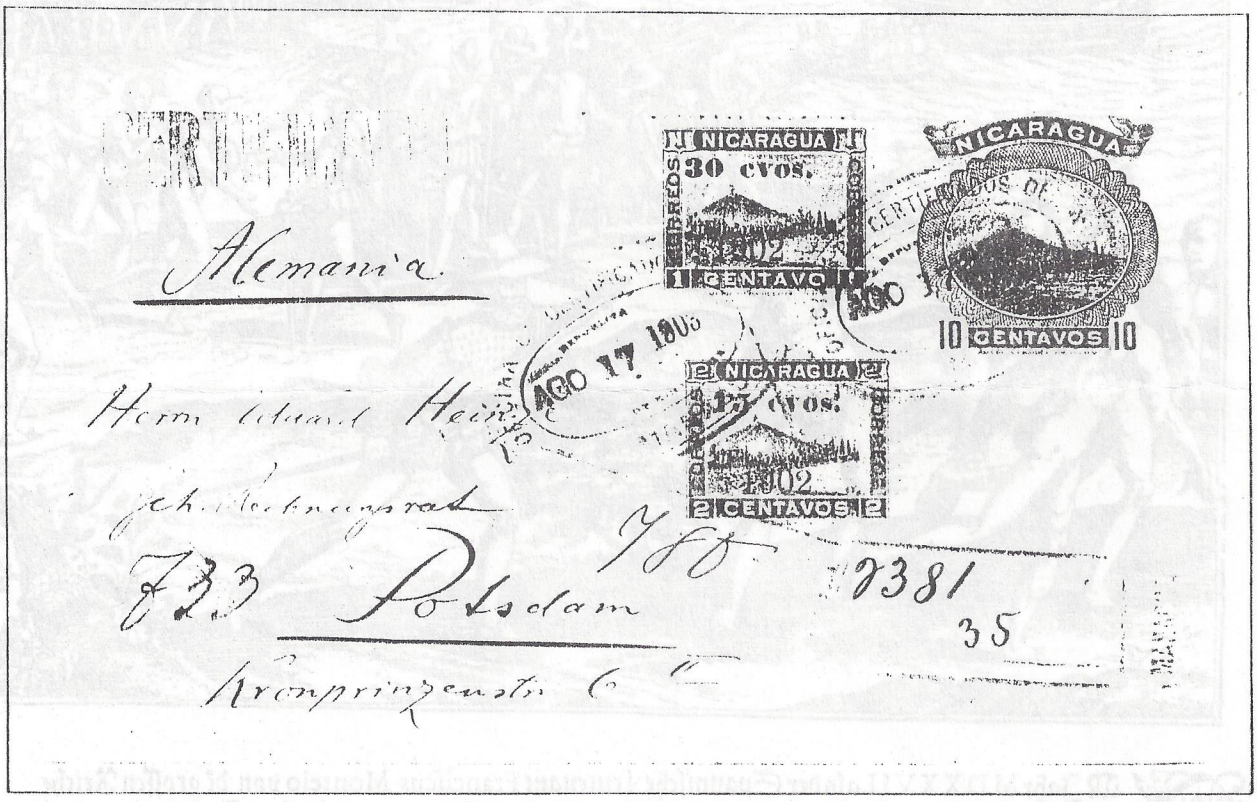
Illustrated here is a cover from the British Vice-Consul in Santo Domingo, to someone in the bank of Tarapaca y Argentina in Valparaiso, Chile. The letter was registered in the Dominican Republic. Upon its arrival in the United States it was re-registered in New York (No.91274), and in Valparaiso, the Chilean postal authorities applied a new registration (No.28803), which makes it a triple registered letter.

This is not possibly a record, but it is a good average.

NICARAGUA: OVERPRINTS ON THE 1900 MOMOTOMBO ISSUE

There is no known decree authorising the overprinting of the 1900 Momotombo issue and we must presume that this authority was destroyed with so much else in the earthquake of 1932.

It has been suggested by one of our members that the 30c overprint of 1902 only existed cancelled to order. Kilian Nathan is definite that this is not the case; examples are rare but he owns several with genuine cancellations in his vast collection. Covers are extremely rare. He has only one example which we illustrate below. It is dated 17 August 1903, and is sent from Managua to Potsdam. Kilian states that he has never seen another.



CHINANDEGA POSTMARKS ON NICARAGUAN POSTAL CARDS

Michael Schreiber's article in Issue 41, pointing out that cancellations of Chinandega appear to have been struck almost exclusively on the left of postal cards clear of the stamp has elicited responses from Denis Kilner and Kilian Nathan confirming this. But there are always exceptions and we show one here. It is interesting to note that this practice appears to have ended when the Momotombo cards were introduced.

Franciſcus Monteius wird Gubernator in der Provintz Jücatana / einer auß den Indianiſchen Cacicis nimt ſich groſſer Freundſchafft an / als ob er ein Verbündnuß mit jm machen wolt / vnderſtehet ſich aber den Monteium mit einem Sebel zu erhawen. XIX

IM Jahr MDXXVII. als der Spanniſche Leutenant Franciſcus Monteio von dē groſſen Reichthumb der Landſchafft Jücatan vernam / iſt er vnder dem Tittel eines oberſten Gubernators auß new Hiſpanien in dieſe Landſchafft Jücatanan geſchifft. Er iſt mit fünff hundert Spaniern / ſampt einer groſſen anzahl von Pferden / vnd vberflüſſigem Vorath an Proviant / vnd andern notwendigen dingen dahin gefahren / ſo bald er da ankehret / ſind etliche Köniſche zu jhm kommen / vnd ſich geſtellt / als wolten ſie Freundſchafft zu jhm machen / vnd begerten jhn zu ſehen: Damit man auch jhnen deſto beſſer vertrawete / ſind ſie ein zimliche lange zeit bey jhm an ſeinem Hoff verharret / biß daß einer auß den Köniſchen ſein gelegenheit erſahe / zücket einem Mohren deß Gubernators Waffenträger den Sebel ohn gefehr auß der Scheiden / vnd reñet mit dem bloſen Sebel auff den Oberſten zu / will jhn zu boden hawen: Als der Gubernator deß Indianers freuentlichen Vorſatz erſahe / erwehret er ſich ſeines Lebens mit ſeinē Schwert. Wie nun die Indianer ſahen daß ſie nichts außrichteten / gaben ſie eilendts die Flucht / jedoch beyder ſeits ohn einigen zugefügten ſchaden. Der Gubernator ſtellt ſein Kriegsvolck alsbald in ein Schlachtordnung / vnd iſt mit denſelbigen hin vnd her in der Provintz geſtreifft / hat alles verheert vnd verbrandt / was er nur antreffen mochte. Hergegen haben ſich die Indianer auch nicht geſeumet / ſondern ſich ritterlich vnd mänlich zur gegenwehr geſtellt vnd fur die Freyheit jhres Vatterlandts trewlich geſtritten. Als aber ſolches ſtreiten vnd fechten neun gantzer Jahr ohn vnderlaß gewehret / vnd ſchier alle Köniſche vnd Oberſte der Indianer waren auff dem Platz blieben / auch an Kräffte vñ Stärcke den Spaniern gar vngleich / haben ſie ſich endlich mit Leib vnd Gut / auff Genad vnd vngenad in der Spanier Gewalt vnd Herſchafft ergeben.

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EARLY TRAVEL ACCOUNTS IN AMERICA by CECILE GRUSON

The following copperplate illustration is drawn from a 1970 facsimile reprint of Theodore Bry's 'AMERICAE', volume V, published initially in 1595. Background to the illustration was given in Issue No.40, p211.

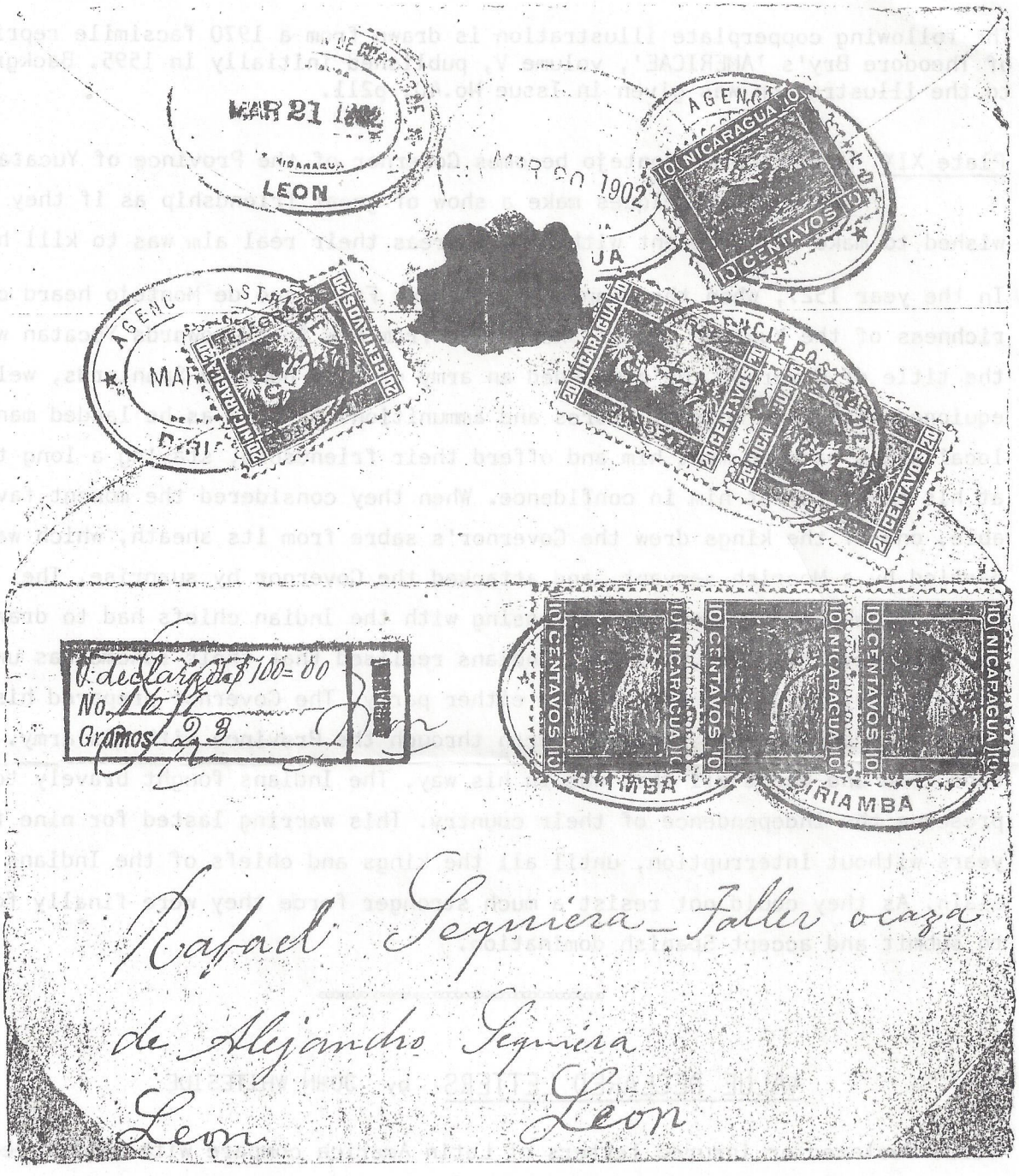
Plate XIX Francisco de Montejo becomes Governor of the Province of Yucatan. The Indian caciques make a show of great friendship as if they wished to make an agreement with him, whereas their real aim was to kill him.

In the year 1527, when the Spanish lieutenant Francisco de Montejo heard of the richness of the Yucatan region, he sailed from New Spain towards Yucatan with the title of Governor. He commanded an army of five hundred Spaniards, well equipped with many horses, stores and ammunition. As soon as he landed many local kings came to meet him and offerd their friendship, staying a long time at his court to put him in confidence. When they considered the moment favourable, one of the kings drew the Governor's sabre from its sheath, which was carried by a Moorish servant, and attacked the Governor by surprise. The Governor, who was peacefully discussing with the Indian chiefs had to draw his sword to save his life. When the Indians realised that their scheme was unsuccessful, they fled, without harm to either party. The Governor prepared his men for battle and marched back and forth through the Province with his army. He conquered and burnt all that was in his way. The Indians fought bravely to preserve the independence of their country. This warring lasted for nine full years without interruption, until all the kings and chiefs of the Indians were slain. As they could not resist a much stronger force they were finally forced to submit and accept Spanish domination.

VALUE DECLARED LETTERS by JOHN WHITESIDE

Value declared or insured letters of Latin America compare with registered letters as we know them. Outside the English speaking world, foreign registration is rather different from what we are used to; it is more like our recorded delivery service. There is only a minimum (if any) sum claimable as compensation for loss. If you wish to be able to claim for loss, you must insure the contents to a stated value and pay a premium according to the value you have declared. This is usually in addition to the appropriate postage and registration fee. In the United Kingdom, this service has never been available for inland letter mail, but it has been available for foreign mail under UPU regulations, since about 1905.

The cover illustrated is my only example of a value declared letter. I cannot explain the rates satisfactorily, but the service is well shown.



Internal Insured Letter: 20 March 1902

The letter, weight 23 grams, has an insured value of 100 pesos, and was sent from Diriamba to Leon. The postage of 100c includes three 20c telegraph stamps. As a double letter, the postage would be 10c (5c per 15g), with 10c for registration leaving a sum of 80c for the insurance fee. The rates published on page 12 of our last issue would suggest an insurance rate alone of 100c, assuming no reduction in the interim.